

Irvine

North Ayrshire

'Mark Two' New Town – Designated 7 November 1966

In response to the 1966 Scottish Economy White Paper, which stressed the need for Scotland to attract more jobs in new industries and build more and better houses in good-quality environments, Irvine was designated as a New Town to provide a growth point for industrial expansion in Ayrshire. The fifth Scottish New Town, Irvine was different from its predecessors in that it was designed to meet housing demand arising from a rapid increase in labour and industrial development. In response to recession in the 1990s, the Development Corporation sought to reduce unemployment by improving the town's social and environmental conditions. Today, Irvine is the primary retail centre within North Ayrshire. A number of regeneration and employment initiatives are currently under way to revitalise the town.



www.rp1.com/geography.org.uk

Key facts:

- **Location:** 38 kilometres south west of Glasgow, 14 kilometres north of Prestwick – the UK's 'only New Town by the sea'.
- **2011 Census population:** 50,297, in 22,094 households (33,698 people in Irvine, 16,599 in Kilwinning).¹
- **Local authority:** North Ayrshire Council.
- **Local Plan status:** North Ayrshire Council Local Development Plan (adopted 2014).

New Town designation:

- **Designated:** 7 November 1966.
- **Designated area:** 5,020 hectares.
- **Intended population:** 116,000 (in the 1971 masterplan), reduced to 95,000 (in 1981) and (in the run-up to winding up the Development Corporation) 63,000 (population at designation: 34,600).
- **Development Corporation:** Designated to provide a 'growth point' for industrial expansion in Ayrshire. Development Corporation wound up 31 December 1996.

Housing, deprivation and health:

- The proportion of homes in Irvine that are owner-occupied (58.4%) is in line with the UK New Towns average and 5.1% below the UK average. 33.2% of households are in social rent – 12% and 15.4% higher than the UK New Towns and UK averages, respectively. 7.8% of households are in private rent – 5% and 8.5% lower than the UK New Towns and UK averages, respectively.
- The North Ayrshire local authority area ranks 3 out of 32 in the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation (1 = most deprived).
- 49.4% of Irvine residents declared themselves to be in 'very good' health – 2.7% and 1.7% higher than the UK New Towns and UK averages, respectively. 29.8% declared themselves to be in 'good' health (just under 4% lower than the UK New Towns and UK averages), but marginally more people declared 'bad' or 'very bad' health than the UK New Towns and UK averages.

Employment/economic profile:

- Irvine is the primary retail centre within North Ayrshire.
- Only 43.5% of residents aged 16-74 were in employment in 2011 (below the then national average of 69%), but initiatives in employment and training are providing new opportunities for school-leavers and the longer-term unemployed.
- North Ayrshire Council, based at Irvine, is the town's biggest employer.
- The Irvine Bay Regeneration Partnership (a Scottish Urban Development Corporation) was set up in 2006.

Development Corporation legacy:

- The town benefits from imaginative and functional open spaces. An attractive waterfront and a semi-rural environment make Irvine a pleasant place to live, with many leisure opportunities in the town and nearby.
- Ground conditions were such that the masterplan would have been challenging to deliver even if the Development Corporation had not been wound up 'early'.
- Demolition of part of the existing core destroyed historic fabric which may have been an asset if regenerated today.
- Demolition of the bridge over the River Irvine caused accessibility issues.
- The location of the indoor shopping mall poses accessibility and riverfront access problems.

Key issues for the future:

- Town centre regeneration – revitalising the town centre and historic core to improve the town's profile and appeal and to generate a 24/7 economy. The Local Development Plan aims to promote and strengthen Irvine's role by directing major retail, commercial, leisure and other appropriate town centre uses to the town centre, including the development of the Rivergate shopping centre.
- Improving accessibility to employment and training opportunities, building on the Life Science Enterprise Area.
- Improving connections and accessibility across the central area and waterfront to improve local and tourist access.

¹ Locality 2010 Irvine and Kilwinning area used

Did you know?

Irvine was home to Robert Burns for 18 months while he learned about the weaving industry at the heckling shop.